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Statement submitted by Women in Europe for a Common Future, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Women in Europe for a Common Future promotes the right to water for all and calls for standards that go beyond the existing standards, which will benefit women and girls in particular. We believe that in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals the number of population lacking access to safe and affordable water needs to be reduced to a minimum.

Specific problems arise from gender-related issues in relation to water. Women and men have distinct responsibilities in using and managing water and water systems. In many developing countries, and in some Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries, women and girls collect water for cooking, washing, cleaning, health and hygiene, raising small livestock and growing food. Rural men need water for irrigation and larger livestock, but women often care for the dairy cattle and young animals. Women also oversee family health. Women often spend long hours carrying water home. Because of their different gender roles, women and men have different stakes in water use, which need to be taken into consideration.

Article 14, paragraph (2) (h) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that State parties "shall ensure to [rural] women the right [...] to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to [...] sanitation [...] and water supply [...]". Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ensures access to clean drinking water for children within the framework of primary health care. This right is further promoted in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, specifically Goals 3, 4, 5 and 7. Goal 7, target 3, focuses exclusively on the issues of safe drinking water and sanitation.

In accordance with paragraph 2 of general comment No. 15 (2002) by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Women in Europe for a Common Future calls for a minimum of 20 litres per capita per day (sufficiency); safe and sustainable sanitation, as pit latrines and unsafe wastewater treatment are a main case of polluted water sources in the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian Region (safety); acceptable water in terms of colour and odour (acceptability); and house connections or at least street taps for every community. In some parts of the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian region, water sources are more than one kilometre from the house, which leads to unsafe water storage practices. Having to walk a long way to reach a water source is a great burden, especially in cold winters when paths are icy and muddy. Physically disabled women and young mothers, in particular, suffer from having to walk long distances (physical accessibility). Women in Europe for a Common Future also calls for the minimum amount of water (20 litres per capita per day) to be free of charge and an adequate price for every litre used beyond the minimum amount. Women in Europe for a Common Future also calls for transparency and information about price policies (affordability).